

A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreilles
and Kootenai Tribes

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES
OF THE FLATHEAD NATION

P.O. BOX 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 275-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
www.cskt.org



A People of Vision

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February 11, 2011

Joint Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services

Dear Honorable Chairman Rep. Don Roberts and honorable members of the Joint
Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services:

**RE: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes Statement on proposed Health and
Human Services (HHS) Budget Reductions - HB 2**

This letter is written to address the serious issues with the proposed Health and Human
Services budget and program reductions. We will first address the issues related to
reductions in health care and then comment on proposed reductions in the Social
Services area.

Health Concerns:

In general, Indian people have higher health risks and poor health. Many of our Tribal
members do not have regular physicians nor do they routinely seek regular (non-
emergency) health care. As the health care services are redefined, more Indian people
are disenfranchised from the health care continuum. As a result, their overall health
condition declines and access to routine (non-specialized) care declines.

Any change in Medicaid services and payments has a detrimental impact on Indian
people and poor people in general. There are many individuals in Montana who qualify
for Medicaid services and who need it. Montana citizens deserve the support of the
state in providing base line health care. Absent state support, many services (any
payments) fall back to the Tribes without necessary reimbursement. Or, the service is
provided and the local physicians and hospitals, like the Tribes "eat" the cost.

As services and payments change, our ability to guide and refer a patient for care
becomes more complex.

Potential Social Services Impacts:

In review, the proposed social services reductions will have a devastating impact on the children in care and on the care providers. The foster care system is a fragile system serving the most vulnerable - children without parents.

To lose the clothing allowance for children in care (CFDS 95304) will only further ostracize those children. Children (and care giving families) will have less financial resources and as a result, will look further out of place. These funds do not provide for "luxury items". They are used for necessities and basic care items. The Tribes will not be able to replace these funds.

To reduce the medical subsidy for children placed in adoptions will be devastating. Many times these children have high medical needs. Adoptive families will be less willing to take on a child with special needs if these services are discontinued. This action can promote extended foster care – no adoptions (CFDS 95302).

To use a real life example, a male Tribal child was taken into foster care at eight (8) hours old. His mother gave birth and left him at the hospital. She did receive any pre-natal care during her pregnancy.

The child was placed into foster care and due to considerable drug and alcohol use by his mother; he was physically unable to hold his formula down. His muscle tone was so weak he could not hold food down, nor could he crawl, nor stand, nor walk. His feet and legs did not have enough strength to hold his thin body up.

This child needed physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy for a three year period before he was able to overcome the impacts of his mother's drug addictions. To lose the medical subsidy for adoptions is to deny medical services to children like the one described above. This affects Indians and non-Indians alike.

All over Montana, children through no fault of their own, enter life with huge physical and emotional challenges. To deny the medical subsidy for adoptions is to prolong the barriers. This is another area that results in a medical cost shift to Tribal Health.

The proposed CFSD 95303 reduces foster care operating expenses to a level that will cause hardships to children, families and the providers in the system. Workers will have less training and less resources. These proposed cuts will dismantle the system of care and the workers who have faithfully served the State.

In our opinion, the **liability** of the State of Montana will increase as the foster care funds that serve fragile families decrease. The state accepts responsibility for the **CARE** of the children and the **CARE** should be at a level we provide to our own families and children.

Before voting on any reduction ask yourself – would I do that to my child? Would I do that to my niece or nephew, if they were in the system?

These are your children – they are Montana's children. The social services reductions need to be reconsidered and full funding restored. Any reduction that reduces medical care to needy and deserving Montana citizens needs to be reconsidered.

Healthy Montana Kids (formerly CHIPS)

In preparing the statement to address the devastating cuts in HB 2, it feels like the legislature is out of touch with the needs of all Montana citizens. Again, any reduction to the Healthy Montana Kids Program will impact families and children who are barely surviving. This program assists individuals who are working and who are trying. To reduce a program that works for working families and children is astonishing.

LIHEAP Funding

On February 10th we understand that the committee voted to not accept federal funding for LIHEAP. This reduces the funding available to all poor people and people who are waiting for the economy to rebound. This again impacts those who need your leadership and financial support the most.

Shame on you when you go home to a warm house and when you are able to pay your utility bill.

Montana's Veterans

I understand HB 2 and the committee recommendations would send vouchers to Veterans instead of having them served in established Veterans homes. You are changing the way our most treasured citizens are being served. You are breaking promises to those who have risked life and limb to protect us. This needs to be reconsidered. Honor the promises to those who served this country and this state with honor and distinction, including the many many Tribal members who served in the military.

Poverty by MT Reservations

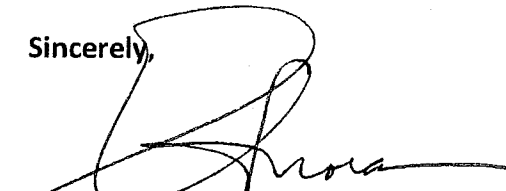
Reservation	Poverty Rate 2000 (30.4% overall reservations)	Unemployment Rate 2005 (51.6% overall reservations)	Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible Kids (2010)
Blackfeet	33.8%	68.5%	81.6%
Crow	30.5%	46.5%	89.5%
Flathead	20.3%	23.7%	56.3%
Ft. Belknap	38.9%	69.6%	79.8%
Ft. Peck	35.3%	53.5%	82.9%
Little Shell	37.4	Not Avail.	Not Avail.
N. Cheyenne	46.1%	59.8%	90.5%
Rocky Boy's	40.8%	67.9%	84.8%
Montana	14.1%	6.8%	37.5%

In summary, the proposed HB 2 reductions are not needed as the money to provide the services to needy people is there. The proposed reductions are irresponsible. The proposed reductions impact health care providers, persons seeking health care, clothing for needy children, medical support for adoptive children, veterans access to health care, special needs children, heating assistance for low income people and the employees who serve foster care providers and children who are left by their families.

The people who elected you are being hurt. Over half of the State of Montana survives at or below the poverty level. These are the people you are hurting. Why? Is this being done simply to prove a point?

Your proposed actions with HB 2 are unbelievable and they are shameful.

Sincerely,



E.T. "Bud" Moran, Chairman
Tribal Council

Copy - Tribal Chairman Communication:

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